Supporting International Student's Acculturation Through Chatbot Technology: A Proposed Study

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Abstract : Despite the increase in international students migrating to the UK, the transition from home environment to a host institution abroad can be overwhelming for many students due to acculturative stressors. These stressors are reported to peak within the first six months of transitioning into study abroad which has determinantal impacts for Higher Education Institutions. These impacts include; increased drop-out rates and overall decreases in academic performance. Research suggests that belongingness can negate acculturative stressors through providing opportunities for students to form necessary social connections. In response to this universities have focussed on utilising technology to create learning communities with the most commonly deployed being social media, blogs, and discussion forums. Despite these attempts, the application of technology in supporting international students is still ambiguous. With the reported growing popularity of mobile devices among students and accelerations in learning technology owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the potential is recognised to address this challenge via the use of chatbot technology. Whilst traditionally, chatbots were deployed as conversational agents in business domains, they have since been applied to the field of education. Within this emerging area of research, a gap exists in addressing the educational value of chatbots over and above the traditional service orientation categorisation. The proposed study seeks to extend upon current understandings by investigating the challenges faced by international students in studying abroad and exploring the potential of chatbots as a solution to assist students' acculturation. There has been growing interest in the application of chatbot technology to education accelerated by the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although interest in educational chatbots has surged, there is a lack of consistency in the research area in terms of guidance on the design to support international students in HE. This gap is widened when considering the additional challenge of supporting multicultural international students with diverse. Diversification in education is rising due to increases in migration trends for international study. As global opportunities for education increase, so does the need for multiculturally inclusive learning support.

Keywords : chatbots, education, international students, acculturation

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